AN

ESSAY

ON THE

ORIGINAL, USE, and EXCELLENCY,

Of the NOBLE

ART and MYSTERY

OF

PRINTING.

LONDON:

Printed for T. LEGG, at the *Parrot and Crown*, in *Green-Arbour-Court* in the *Little-Old-Baily*; and at the Pamphlet-Shops of *London* and *Westminster*. M.DCC.LII.

[Price Four-Pence.]

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AN ESSAY ON THE ORIGINAL, USE, and EXCELLENCY, Of the NOBLE ART and MYSTERY OF PRINTING.

IT would certainly redound very much to the Dishonour of Printers, if the Original of this Noble Art should not be transmitted to Posterity; since it is by Printing alone, that the earliest Actions of Antiquity are brought down to the present Age; for this Art, by multiplying Books, hath multiply'd Knowledge, and brought to our Cognizance both Persons and Things vastly remote from us, and long before our Time; which otherways had perish'd in Oblivion, and been as Things which never had a Being.

I have therefore endeavour'd, in this ſhort Eſſay, to reſcue from the Iron Teeth of Time, the Original of that Noble Myſtery, which gives Immortality even to Learning it-ſelf, and is the great Conſervator of all other Arts and Sciences.

And yet, to whom the World is indebted for this excellent Invention, we do not certainly know; this being one of the *Inventa Adeſpota*, of the maſterleſs Inventions: Of which the only Reaſon that can be aſſign'd, is,

Laus veterum eſt meruiſſe, omnis præconia famæ,
Et ſpreviſſe ſimul ———

Brave Men more ſtudious were in former Days,
Of doing Good, than of obtaining Praiſe.

That it is a *Teutonick* Invention, is agreed upon by moſt Voices. Hence the Poet ſings,

O Germanica! *Muneris repertrix,*
Quod nihil Utilius dedit Vetuſtas;
Libros ſcribere, quæ, doces premendo.

Which may be thus Paraphras'd:

O noble German! *Author of this Gift,*
(Which e'en to Heaven it-ſelf thy Fame does lift)
Antiquity ne'er yet divulg'd that Thing
Which did more Profit unto Mankind bring,
Or unto learned Labours more incite,
Since thus by th' Preſs thou do'ſt large Volumes write.

But whether *Higher* or *Lower Germany* ſhall have the Honour of it, is yet a Controverſy undecided: And in the *Upper Germany*, whether *Mentz*, *Baſil*, or *Straſbourg*; for all theſe do not only challenge it, but contend no leſs for the Birth-Place of this noble Myſtery, than the *Gre-*

cian Cities did for the Cradle of *Homer*. (Which, by the way, is no ſmall Indication of the juſt Value which the World has of it, ſince there is ſuch ſtriving for the Honour of its Original.) The general Voice is for *Mentz*, and that one *John Guttenberg*, (or *Fuſt*, or *Fauſtemberg*, as others term him) a Knight and Citizen of that City, was the true Father and Inventor of this Art, about the Year 1440. And that the Occaſion of it was, His having cut the Letters of his Name out of the Bark of a Tree, which was green and full of Sap, and afterwards putting them into a fine Linen Handkerchief, the Letters impreſs'd upon the Linen their own Characters: This firſt inſpired him with the Thoughts of making Characters of Metal, that might make an Impreſſion upon Paper, which he afterwards effected. This is ſtrongly affirm'd by the Citizens of *Mentz*, ſaith *Polydore Virgil*, Lib. II. Cap. 7. *de Invent. Rerum*: And for Proof hereof, they produce a Copy of *Tully*'s *Offices*, printed on Parchment, and preſerv'd in the Library of *Auſburg*, having this Memorandum at the latter End of it: *Præſens* M. Tullii *Opus Clariſſimum*, Jo. Fuſt, Moguntinus *Civis, non Atramento Plumali Canna, neque Ærea, ſed Arte quadam per pulchra manu* Petri Gerſheim, *Pueri mei, feliciter effeci: Finitum Anno* 1440. *die quarto Menſ. Feb.* In *Engliſh* thus: *I* John Fuſt, *Citizen of* Moguntia, *have happily effected the preſent illuſtrious Work of* Mark Tully; *perform'd neither by Pen and Ink, nor Braſs, but by a certain Art, purely by the fair Hand of my Son* Peter Gerſheim: *Done in the Year* 1440. *on the fourth Day of* February. This is cited by *Salmuth* in his Annotations on *Pancirollus*, who ſtands ſtifly for *Germany* (his own Country) in this Point; and alſo cites another Argument

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from the Library of *Francfort*, wherein an old Copy of the Deciſions of the *Rota* are kept; at the latter End thereof it is ſaid, That it was printed *in Civitate* Moguntiæ *Artis Impreſſoriæ Inventrice & Elimatrice prima*; that is, *In the City of* Moguntia, *being the firſt Inventor and Refiner of the Art of* PRINTING.

But notwithſtanding all theſe Evidences for *High Germany*, yet *Hadrianus Junius*, a very learned Man of the *Low Countries*, is as ſtiff on the other Side for *Haerlem*, making that the Birth-Place of this Noble Art. This *Junius* (in his Hiſtory of the *Netherlands*) tells us, That one *Laurence John*, others call him *Laurence Coſter*, a Burgher of good Note and Quality in the City of *Haerlem*, was the firſt Inventor of it, and ſaith, That he made Letters firſt of the Bark of Trees, (as was ſaid of the other) which being ſet and rank'd in Order, and put with their Heels upwards upon Paper, he made the firſt Eſſay and Experiment of this Art: At firſt he made but a Line or two, then whole Pages, and then Books, but printed on one ſide only, which Rudiments of the Art, *Junius* ſays, he ſaw in that Town.

And then, to turn *John Guttemberg*, or *Fuſt*, or *Fauſtus*, quite out of Doors, he gives us this further Account: Soon after this, the before-named *Laurence John* made Types or Characters of Tin, and brought the Art to further Perfection daily: But one *John Fauſtus*, (tho' he proved *Infauſtus* to him) who was his Servant, and had learn'd the Myſtery, ſtole away all the Letters and other Utenſils belonging to the Trade; and after ſeveral Removes, ſet up for himſelf at *Mentz*, making as if he were the firſt Inventor of it, (whereas, if what *Junius* ſays, be true, he had only ſtole it

from

from *Laurence John*) and the first Book he printed there, was the *Doctrinal* of one *Alexander Gallus*, which he printed *Anno* 1440.

This is further confirm'd by *Hegenitz*, who saith, That the House of *Laurence John*, is yet standing in the Market-Place of *Haerlem*, with the following Inscription in Golden Letters over the Door:

Memoriæ Sacrum,
Typographiæ Ars, Artium Conservatrix, his primum Inventa, circa Annum MCCCCXL.

That is,

Sacred to Memory,
The Art of Printing, the Preserver of Arts, was first invented here, about the Year MCCCCXL.

And underneath, these Verses:

Vana quid Archetypos & Præla Moguntia *jactas?*
Haerlemi *Archetypos prælaque nota scias.*
Extulit hic, monstrante Deo, Laurentius *Artem;*
Dissimulare Virum hunc, dissimulare Deum est.

Which I have thus Paraphras'd:

Moguntia, *why do you thus vainly boast*
Of Archetypes and Presses at your Cost,
Whereas at Haerlem *they were first, thou know'st?*
There to Laurentius *first, inspir'd by Heaven,*
The Knowledge of this Noble Art was given:
To rob the Man who did this Art reveal,
Is a like Crime as 'tis from Heaven to steal.

Thus I have given the different Pleas of both Parties; yet will not pretend to determine which

is

is in the Right, but leave the Decision to the Reader's Judgment.

But this is certain, That altho' the chief Honour is due to the Inventor, yet that Perfection and Beauty that PRINTING is now arrived at, is very much owing to them that came after; many in the present Age have not a little contributed thereto: Among whom I cannot but particularly mention Mr. WILLIAM CASLON and his SON, Letter-Founders in *Chiswel-Street*, who have very much, by their indefatigable Labours, promoted the Honour of this ART; and who have lately printed three Broad Sheet Specimens of their curious Types; one of them consisting of all the common Sorts of Letter used in Printing; the second Sheet is divers sorts of the *Orientals*, *Old English*, and *Saxon*; and the third contains a great Variety of curious Flowers and Fancies for ornamenting of Title-Pages, Tickets, *&c.* also several Sorts of Titling-Letter of *Roman*, *Old English* and *Greek*; and the whole for their Master-Strokes and curious Flourishes, out-do all that have been cast in *England*, *Holland*, or any other Place before. And here it may not be amiss to mention Mr. STEPHEN BAYLIS, of St. *Anne's-Lane*, near *Aldersgate*, who by great Study and Application, hath found out a Method of making that curious Compound, called *Printer's Ink*, which for its clear and beautiful Black, cannot be exceeded by any one.——But the above shall suffice, as to the Original of PRINTING.

It now remains that I say something as to its Use and Excellency.

And

And this is ſo obvious to all diſcerning Men, that I need ſay the leſs: This illuſtrious Art being ſufficiently known to be the great Propagator and Diffuſer of all Uſeful Knowledge: For ſince the Art of PRINTING was found out, which is ſomewhat above Three Hundred Years, all ſorts of Learning has been more diffus'd and cultivated, than in a Thouſand Years before: And what great Advances and mighty Progreſs is daily made in finding out abſtruſe Secrets, and diſcovering the hidden Myſteries of Art and Nature, thoſe that are converſant among Books do know very well. And all this is juſtly to be attributed to this incomparable Art of PRINTING, which gives Men ſuch an Advantage of communicating their Thoughts to each other, in a plain and eaſy Manner, as the Ages before this Invention were ignorant of. And therefore Erudition and Learning, the Improvement of all the Works of Nature, and the Perfection of all Arts and Sciences, are the genuine Effects of this Noble Myſtery, and an evident Demonſtration of its Uſe and Excellency.

'Tis by the Art of PRINTING, that we come to know the Lives and Actions of the renowned Worthies of the firſt Ages of the World; whereby thoſe Things which were tranſacted five Thouſand Years ago, are as familiar to us, as if they had been done but Yeſterday. 'Tis PRINTING that does immortalize the Memory of antient Heroes, and tranſmits their Actions to the End of Time.

But in nothing does this noble Myſtery more illuſtriouſly ſhew itſelf, than in the Aſſiſtance it has given to the Propagation of the true Religion; having baniſhed that Cimmerian Darkneſs that had over-ſpread the Face of the Earth, and

caus'd the glorious Light of the Gospel to shine forth with a resplendant Lustre, by the Printing of that invaluable Treasure of a Christian, *The Holy Scriptures*. Before the finding out of this illustrious Art, the Epistle of St. *James* was thought a mighty Pennyworth, when purchas'd for a Load of Hay; whereas now both the Old and New Testament may be bought for Five Shillings.

Nor is it by the Printing of the Bible only, that this noble Art has been serviceable to Religion; but also by emitting many other good Books and useful Tracts into the World, whereby the Errors of Popery have been discover'd and confuted, and the Way of Truth made known. Hence *N. Billingsley* tells us, in his *Brachy-Martyrologia*,

The Gospel-Light appear'd not very clear,
Until the Fourteen Hundred Fiftieth Year,
Wherin GOD pleased to unbosom Night,
The Art of PRINTING *being brought to Light.*

And another ingenious Author to the same Purpose tells us:

The noble Art of PRINTING *found*
No sooner, but it ROME *did wound;*
And ever since, with nimble Ray,
Spreads Knowledge to a perfect Day.

It is in respect of its Use and Excellency, that *Polydore Virgil* stiles it, *A Divine Blessing afforded to Mankind*: And therefore *Cardan* tells us, *That it is an Art inferior to none, either for Wit or Usefulness; far out-doing the most dextrous Writer, both for Neatness and Expedition: For one Press can dispatch more Work in one Day, than the swiftest Writer can*

can transcribe in a Year. On this Account alſo, *Petrus Scriverius* calls it, *Palladium, Præſidium, & Tutelam Muſarum, & omnis Doctrinæ*; that is, *The Fortreſs, Garriſon, and Defence, not only of the Muſes, but of all Literature whatſoever.*

But to conclude,

This noble Art was firſt brought into *England*, by Mr. *Frederick Corſellis*, at the Inſtance and Deſire of that Moſt Reverend and Learned Prelate, Dr. *Simon Iſlip*, Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, in the Year of our Lord 1471, and in the Reign of King *Henry* VI. who was at the whole Expence of it; whence PRINTING was for many Years accounted the King's Prerogative as much as Coining; but in Proceſs of Time it became a free Trade. The firſt *Printing-Preſs* in *England* was ſet up by the before-mentioned Archbiſhop *Iſlip* in *Weſtminſter-Abbey*, and PRINTING firſt uſed there by *William Caxton*. And its being firſt ſet up in a Church, occaſion'd all *Printing-Houſes* to be called CHAPELS, which Name they retain to this Day.

The following POEM written many Years ago, and now quite out of print, I have added to this Account, being well aſſured it will be very acceptable to all Lovers of *the noble Art and Myſtery of* PRINTING.

A CONTEMPLATION ON THE *Myſtery of* MAN'S REGENERATION, IN *Alluſion to the Myſtery of* PRINTING.

GReat bleſt Maſter-Printer, *come*
Into thy Compoſing-Room:
Wipe away our foul Offences,
Make, O make our Souls and Senſes,
The Upper *and the* Lower-Caſes;
And thy large Alphabet *of Graces*
The Letter, *which being ever fit,*
O haſte thou to Diſtribute *it:*
For there is (I make amount)
No Imperfection *in the* Fount.
If any Letter's Face *be* foul,
O waſh *it e'er it touch the Soul;*
Contrition be the Bruſh, *the* Lye
Tears from a Penitential Eye.

Thy Graces ſo Diſtributed,
Think not thy Work half finiſhed:

On ſtill, O Lord, *no Time defer,*
Be truly a Compositor;
Take thy Compoſing-Stick *in Hand,*
Thy holy Word, the firmeſt Band;
For ſure that Work can never miſs,
That's truly juſtify'd *in this.*

The End of Grace's Diſtribution,
Is not a mere Diſſolution;
But that from each Part being cited,
They may be again united.
Let Righteouſneſs and Peace then meet,
Mercy and Truth each other greet;
Let theſe Letters *make a* Word,
Let theſe Words *a* Line *afford,*
Then of Lines *a* Page compoſe,
Which being brought unto a cloſe,
Be thou the Direction, Lord;
Let Love be the faſt-binding Cord.

Set, *O* Lord, *O* Set apace,
That we may grow from Grace to Grace;
Till tow'rds the Chace *we nearer draw*
The two ſtrong Tables of thy Law;
Of which the Two *firm* Croſſes *be,*
The Love of Man, next after Thee.
The Head-Sticks *are thy Majeſty,*
The Foot-Sticks *Chriſt's Humility;*
The Supplication of the Saints,
The Side-Sticks, *when our Faith e'er Faints:*
Let the Quoins *be thy ſure Election,*
Which admits of no Rejection;
With which our Souls being join'd about,
Not the leaſt Grace can then drop out.
Thy Mercies and Allurements all,
Thy Shooting-Stick *and* Mallet *call.*

But when all this is done we ſet,
Who ſhall the Corrector *be?*
O Lord, *what thou* Set'ſt *can't be ill,*
It needs then no Corrector's *Skill.*

Now, tho' theſe Graces are all Set,
Our Hearts are but White-Paper *yet;*
And by Adam's *firſt Tranſgreſſion,*
Fit only for the worſt Impreſſion.
Thy Holy Spirit the Preſs-Man *make,*
From whom we may Perfection take;
And let Him no Time defer,
To Print *on us thy* Character.

Let the Ink *be black as* Jet,
What tho'? it is comely yet;
As Curtains of King Solomon,
Or Kedars *Tents to look upon.*

Be Victory the Preſs's Head,
That o'er Oppreſſion it may tread:
Let Divine Contemplation be
The Skrews, *to raiſe us up to Thee:*
The Preſs's Two Cheeks *(unſubdu'd)*
Strong Conſtancy and Fortitude:
Our ſlaviſh Fleſh let be the Till,
Whereon to lay what Traſh *you will:*
The Nut *and* Spindle, *Gentleneſs,*
To move the Work with Eaſineſs:
The Platten *is Affliction,*
Which makes good Work, being hard ſet on.
The Bar, *the Spirit's Inſtrument,*
To ſanctify our Puniſhment:
The Blanket *a Reſemblance hath*
Of Mercy in the midſt of Wrath:
The Friſket, *thy preventing Grace,*
Keeps us from many a ſully'd Face.

CHRIST JESUS *is the* Level Stone,
That our Hearts must be Wrought *upon.*
The Coffin *wherein it doth lie,*
Is Rest to all Eternity.
The Cramp-Irons *that it moves on ſtill,*
Are the good Motions of the Will:
The Rounce, *the Spirit's Inſpiration,*
Working a holy Agitation.
The Girts, *the Gift of Continence,*
The Tether of th' unbridled Senſe:
The Winter, *whereon all doth lie,*
Is Patience in Adverſity:
The Foot-Step, *Humbleneſs of Mind,*
That in itſelf no Worth can find.

If there be ſuch a Chance as this,
That any Letter batter'd *is,*
Being come unto thy View,
Take it out, put in a new;
Or if Satan, that foul Fiend,
Marr, with a Pretence to Mend,
And being at thy Goodneſs vext,
Makes Blaſphemy of thy pure Text,
Find it out, O LORD, *and then,*
Print *our Hearts new o'er again.*

O LORD, *unto this Work make haſte,*
'Tis a Work that long will laſt:
And when this White-Paper's *done,*
Work a Reiteration.

FINIS.

PAMPHLETS [sold] by T. LEGG, at the *Parrot and Crown* in *Green-Arbour-Court*, in the *Little Old-Bailey*.

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